

Message Text

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43

ACTION COA-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-10 CIAE-00

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R 171415Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3965

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USEC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USUN NEW YORK 373

USMISSION NATO

USOECD PARIS 516

USMISSION GENEVA

CINCLANT

COMICEDEFOR

NISRA KEFLAVIK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR IC UK

SUBJECT: FISHERIES DISPUTE: BRITISH PROPOSE INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION TO CONSIDER RAMMING INCIDENTS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN RESPONST TO GOI THREAT TO SEVER DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS WITH BRITISH IF FURTHER RAMMING INCIDENTS TAKE PLACE,
BRITISH HAVE NOW PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
TO CONSIDER ESTABLISHMENT OF FAULT IN SHIP COLLISIONS. GOI WILL
CONSIDER PROPOSAL AT CABINET MEETING SEPTEMBER 18. END SUMMARY.

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2. BRITISH AMBASSADOR DELIVERED FOLLOWING NOTE TO MFA SEPT 14.:

"HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S EMBASSY PRESENT THEIR COMPLIMENTS TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HAVE THE HONOUR TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE MINISTRY'S NOTE OF 11 SEPTEMBER 1973. IN THAT NOTE THE MINISTRY STATE THAT 'IN CASE BRITISH WARSHIPS AND TUGBOATS CONTINUE RAMMING ICELANDIC SHIPS THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT WILL FEEL OBLIGATED TO BREAK OFF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ICELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN AND HAVE THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN REYKJAVIK CLOSED AND ITS DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL RECALLED'.

"THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TRUST THAT THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT DO NOT IN FACT WISH THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SHOULD BE BROKEN FOR THIS WOULD CLEARLY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO REACH THE INTERIM AGREEMENT ON FISHERIES WHICH BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE SEEKING, AND WHICH WOULD AUTOMATICALLY PUT AN END TO THE RISK OF FURTHER INCIDENTS AT SEA IN THE DISPUTED AREA.

"AS MATTERS NOW STAND, AND IN THE SITUATION WHERE ICELANDIC COAST GUARD VESSELS ARE ATTEMPTING TO ARREST BRITISH TRAWLERS OR CUT THEIR TRAWL-WARPS, AND HER MAJESTY'S SHIPS AND THE DEFENCE TUGS ARE SEEKING TO PREVENT THEM FROM DOING SO, SOME RISK OF COLLISIONS OR OTHER INCIDENTS MUST INEVITABLY PERSIST. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MUST AGAIN CATEGORICALLY REJECT THE ASSERTION THAT 'BRITISH WARSHIPS AND TUGBOATS' HAVE BEEN 'RAMMING ICELANDIC SHIPS'. THE COLLISIONS HAVE RESULTED FROM THE DANGEROUS MANOEUVRING OF THE ICELANDIC COASTGUARD VESSELS THEMSELVES. BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE BRITISH AND ICELANDIC GOVERNMENTS DISAGREE ABOUT THE FACTS OF THE VARIOUS INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED AND THAT A SIMILAR DISAGREEMENT OVER FACTS IN A FUTURE INCIDENT COULD NOW RESULT IN THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT DECIDING TO BREAK OFF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

"THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THEREFORE PROPOSE THAT, IF A COLLISION OCCURS BETWEEN AN ICELANDIC COASTGUARD VESSEL AND ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S SHIPS OR ONE OF THE DEFENCE TUGS, AND EITHER GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE OTHER'S VESSEL HAS DELIBERATELY RAMMED THEIR OWN, AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY BE IMMEDIATELY CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF ESTABLISHING, ON THE BASIS OF ALL THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, WHETHER OR NOT SUCH A DELIBERATE RAMMING TOOK PLACE. A SUITABLE PRECEDENT FOR SUCH A COMMISSION MIGHT BE THE THREE-MAN COMMISSION SET UP BY THE DANISH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENQUIRE INTO THE 'RED CRUSADER' INCIDENT OF 1961.

"IF THE ABOVE PROPOSALS ARE ACCEPTABLE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SUGGEST THAT DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BEGIN AT ONCE ON THE DETAILS."

3. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRY FONMIN EINAR AGUSTSSON INDICATED THAT BRITISH PROPOSAL WAS UNDER STUDY AND WOULD BE DISCUSSED AT

GOI CABINET MEETING SEPTEMBER 18. IRVING

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